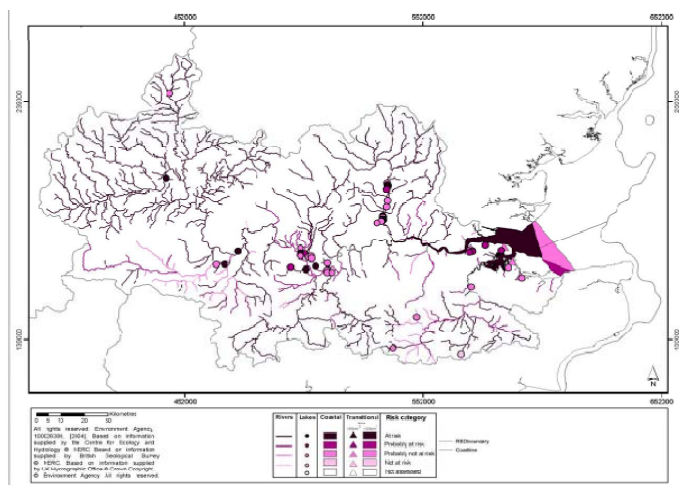


River Basin Districts and Authorities

The Thames is one of eleven river basin districts in England and Wales. The Thames basin covers an area of 13,000 km² (4%) of the UK land area, but houses over 12M people (20% of the UK population) and generates 25% of the Gross National Product (GNP). Land use is a mix of rural (countryside and farmland) and urban, dominated by London in the east. The Thames is one of the driest parts of the UK, with an average annual rainfall of only 690 mm.

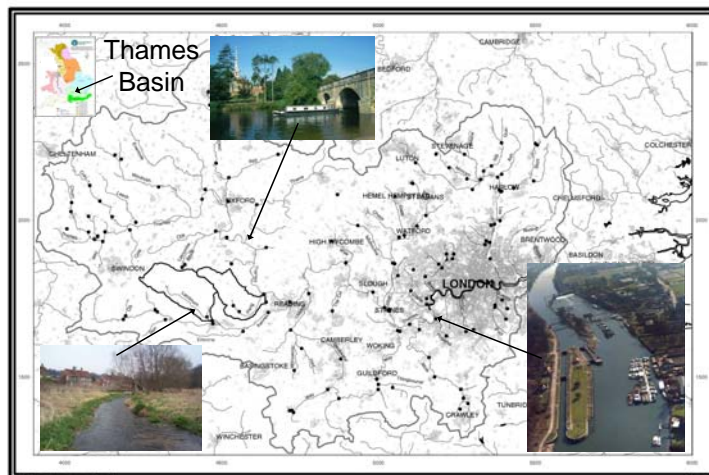
The Government body responsible for implementing the WFD is DEFRA (Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs), supported by the Environment Agency, the public body for protecting and improving the environment.



River Basin Management Plans

Effective and sustainable management of the basin's water resources is becoming increasingly important. The priority basin-wide concerns relate to the future water resource supply, particularly during drought events, to flood risk and to water quality. Thames Water supplies drinking water to over 8M customers in the London and Thames Valley area, operating more than 100 water treatment works and over 31,000 km of water mains, and supplying an average of 2,600 MI of drinking water every day. Much of the water supply area is classed as "seriously water stressed".

Proposed actions to address these issues now and in the future are presented in the Environment Agency's Five-Year Plan and Thames Water's Water Resource Management Plan for the next 25 years. These documents will inform the WFD river basin planning process.



River Basin Characterisation

Multiple pressures in the Thames put many water bodies at risk of not achieving the WFD's environmental objectives and good ecological status. Growth in population and the number of households increases the demand on land for houses and industries, and on the basin's water resources and waste disposal capacity. Climate change may result in possibly greater risks of flooding in winter, and droughts and water shortages in summer.

The majority of the 448 river water bodies, 46 lake water bodies, 10 transitional and coastal water bodies and 45 groundwater bodies in the Thames basin are at risk of not achieving good status, largely due to diffuse source pollution. This is linked to land use activity e.g. agriculture.



Thames in flood at Wallingford in January 2003 (photo: RAF Benson)

Public consultation

Stakeholder engagement and a series of consultations throughout the WFD implementation process will create a wider awareness of the challenges facing the water environment and the ways in which they can be tackled, and will culminate in the production of a first River Basin Management Plan in 2009.

The advanced state of river basin management and the abundance of management plans in the Thames basin, has enabled it to demonstrate and contribute examples of good practice to the other TWINLAIN basins in order to encourage improved management approaches.